

Care

by SignorinaSickfic

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Summary: Hiccup gets sick, very sick, in the middle of the night, and it's up to those who love him most to help him through it. But what happens when the illness begins to take its toll? For the young Viking, care and compassion come to mean everything. Takes place after the events of HTTYD 2. Contains spoilers.

## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*Title: Care\*\***

**\*\*Fandom: How to Train Your Dragon (2)\*\***

**\*\*\*\*Rating: T\*\*\*\***

**\*\*Genre: Hurt/Comfort, Family\*\***

**\*\*Characters: Hiccup, Astrid, Valka, Toothless\*\***

**\*\*Pairings: Slight Hiccup/Astrid\*\***

**\*\*Disclaimer: I own nothing and make no money from this. I just love these characters!\*\***

**\*\*Spoilers: Contains MAJOR spoilers for How to Train Your Dragon 2\*\***

**\*\*A/N: Hello all! I know I have two other stories that need updates, and I am getting to that, but this one has been percolating in my head and I really wanted to publish it. After seeing the second HTTYD movie 3 times, I have become completely obsessed! This story takes place sometime after the second film.\*\***

**\* \* \***

**><p><strong>Chapter 1<strong>**

Valka watched her son, curled up under his blanket furs, with a pang of sorrow. Hiccup's cheeks were flushed red, the rest of his face washed out by a sickly, chalky pallor. His eyes were ringed by dark shadows, his pale countenance was glistening with sweat though he trembled with chills beneath the thick covers, his nose was fiery red and chapped, and he was whimpering in his sleep. Slowly, she approached him, setting the broth and warm sheep's milk she carried by his bed and fussing with the covers draped over his son's wiry frame. Slowly, the young chief opened his bleary, fever-bright eyes and looked groggily up at his mother.

"Mom," he rasped, coughing just as harshly into the furs as he had all night.

"Shh," Valka soothed, smoothing her son's hair comfortingly. "Rest. Your coughing has kept you suffering all night." Hiccup finished his choking and wiped his watering eyes with a snuffle. His nose began to twitch, an itch taking up residence in his sinuses that he couldn't shake. It tickled, and no measure of rubbing was making it better.

"I don't feel well," he admitted, closing his eyes against the pounding in his head that was making it hard to hear. Suddenly though, his eyes flew open as the tickle in his sinuses flared. He let out a soft, wet `"Hehhhrâ€| nnnxxtSCHHuu!"` into his tunic sleeve, groaning as it worsened the ache in his skull. He gazed up at his mother with glassy eyes.

"I know," the woman acknowledged, placing her other palm against his forehead. She drew back suddenly, as though his skin may burn her, then replaced the back of it on his brow to provide comfort to the ailing boy. Hiccup closed his eyes immediately, leaning into his mother's cool, gentle, familiar touch. "You're running a temperature," she commented, her voice never rising above a whisper. "I'm calling a healer as soon as the village wakes," she added, sweeping her hand across his hairline and brushing a few errant locks back and off his sweaty forehead. She stood abruptly, retracting her hand much to Hiccup's dismay, and went quickly down to get a small bucket of cool water and a rag.

Downstairs, Toothless followed her around like a sad begging puppy until she finally conceded to let the restless dragon visit his sick friend. He was probably itching for a ride, but Valka did not know how to work the dragon's tail, and Hiccup was too sick to be leaving his bed at all this day. Still, she hoped letting the dragon see Hiccup would be beneficial to both of them. She brought the bucket and the beast to the bed chamber and began to soak the rag in the water.

Through the haze of fever, Hiccup recognized Toothless' presence and forced a weak smile despite the mounting pain and exhaustion. "Hey, bud," he said softly, his voice a hoarse croak. He reached out his hand to stroke the Night Fury's head and chin, shaking like a leaf. He began to shiver all the harder, the cold air in the room enveloping and chilling his skin. `"_Haa-_ahh_â€|sscchhh! IITTSSCHHuuuh! _Ugh."` This particular fit inspired a new bout of coughing that bent the young Viking nearly double and left him and gasping for air. Hiccup rubbed his lowest ribs gently, groaning in agony. All his coughing had left him in severe pain. The dragon

recognized something was wrong immediately and looked to Valka for an answer.

"He was up coughing all night," the woman told the dragon as she soaked and wrung out the rag several times. She recalled the previous night, with Toothless pacing restlessly in the back while she sat up with her bedridden boy, holding him close while he coughed and snuffled miserably. She had used her body as a shock absorber to hold him steady as his fits pitched him forward. Every time they had seemed to subside, he'd lie back, only to shoot up again seconds later when a new fit would violently grip him. He hadn't slept a wink all through the night, unable to stop the coughing. She had tried a honey and tonic mixture, but it hadn't worked at all. He had only been able to settle down when the first rays of dawn had beamed over Berk. When he had quieted enough to let exhaustion overtake him, she had left him sleeping fitfully and had gone to make him broth.

"He's sick, Toothless, and running a bad fever," she concluded, squeezing the rag out one final time to drain the excess water. She shook it, making it unfurl, and folded it in half. The Night Fury eyed his weakened friend with a worried face. His eyes studied the suffering rider, taking note of the symptoms visible on his face. Hiccup managed another weak, unconvincing smile in reply.

"I'm fine, buddy," he rasped. "I feel better." It was a lie, one his mother saw right through.

"Yes, you feel fine and I'm the Alpha," she teased gently, coming back to the bedside. Toothless lowered his head suspiciously and gently licked his rider's forehead, wincing at the heat and leaving traces of cool saliva. Hiccup's eyes immediately closed and he moaned softly. Valka smiled affectionately, her eyes sad, and pressed the cold rag to her son's burning forehead. Hiccup shuddered, exhaling pleausurably.

"F-feels good," he stuttered, his shivering picking up dramatically. "\_Hehhhhâ€| Hehhhrrâ€| nnnxxtSCHHuu. IhhhS\_\_\*\*SCH\*\*\_\_Huu!"\_ The last sneeze hurt and he whimpered softly once again.

"Mm," Valka said with a nod, pressing the cloth down again and skimming the sweat off Hiccup's brow. "\_Velsigne\_." She softly hummed as she sponged the sweat from his face and neck, working to cool and comfort him. After one solitary cough, Hiccup's eyelids grew heavy and he couldn't force them open anymore. Toothless rested his head on the young chief's chest, snuggling to him and keeping him warm. Hiccup cuddled the dragon and listened to his mother's voice as humming turned to singing and wet cloth was set down on his forehead to leech the heat from his skin. Valka ran her fingers lightly through her son's hair as she sang softly to him, just as she had to his father not long ago, and to Hiccup back when he was just a babe. Hiccup felt soothed by the familiar melody and safe under his mother's care, despite the mounting fever haze, crippling pain, and distracting nausea clawing endlessly at his stomach. The words lulled him, took him on a comforting journey, and fell into a warm, restless sleep.

Valka watched over him for a few more moments before leaving him in the dragon's care and succumbing to her own exhaustion. The healers would not be awake at this hour. Hiccup would be alright for now. She went for a nap, confident that Toothless would get her if something

was wrong. She lied down and was also quickly overtaken by sleep.

It had been only an hour or so into her rest when Hiccup began to toss and turn, muttering feverishly to himself in his sleep and flailing about restlessly.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Just got back and already leaving it on a cliffy! Hope you all enjoyed, and there will be more soon! Also, to those of you following my other stories, all are getting updates in the coming days. If you feel compelled, please review!  
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\*\*Thanks!\*\*

\*\*~SS\*\*

## 2. Chapter 2

\*\*A/N: Thanks to everyone who read and for all the nice reviews! I'm super pumped about being back!\*\*

\*\*~SPOILERS IN THIS SECTION~ You have been warned.\*\*

\*\*Usual disclaimers still apply. \*\*

\*\*But for now, on with the story.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chapter 2<strong>

Toothless lifted his head off the rider's chest, noticing the disturbance, and cocked it to the side. With a curious coo, he watched Hiccup toss from side to side, seemingly distressed. Hiccup cringed in his sleep, writhing and moaning and sweating more than should have been possible. The now humid cloth slipped to the ground, allowing the youthful Viking's fever to spike rapidly as he continued to thrash about. Unintelligible words became clearer as, in his fevered haze, Hiccup called out. His tone was tortured and desperate, and hot, salty tears began to run down his pinked cheeks.

"Dad," he cried hoarsely, thrashing harder. "Toothless! Toothless no! C'mon buddy, don't... Please!" The sick, delirious Viking began to sob bitterly. "Please. No." Gently, at the sound of his name, Toothless perked up and licked his friend's cheek until the boy awakened, still sobbing, and leaned over his bed to be violently ill. As Hiccup choked through his sobs, the dragon barked once desperately and disappeared. Of course it would, Hiccup thought bitterly. He was disgusting. His nose was still drippy, he was crying, sweat was beaded on his brow, among other things. Disoriented, he gazed around. Everything ached, from his head to his good foot, and his body burned and pounded against the illness. He felt as though he were inside a spyglass, with his vision distorted and blurred at the edges.

"T-toothless?" He called weakly, through violent tremors and chattering teeth. He gazed around frantically. "Buddy? Come back..."

And suddenly, the Night Fury reappeared, snarling, his eyes narrowed to slits, his body glowing with preparedness for the next attack. Hiccup cried out, backing away and glancing wildly around even though he knew he shouldn't break eye contact. The walls were shimmering, as though a million, clear beetles were climbing and crawling on them. They seemed to whisper to him, these mysterious insects did, chastising him with a cacophony of hissing accusations.

"It's your fault he's dead," they said. "Your fault, all your fault. You aren't a hero, you killed him, it's your fault it's your fault it's your fault, Hiccup, your fault your fault your fault Hiccup. Hiccup. it's because of you he's dead Hiccup. It's your fault, your fault, Hiccup... Hiccupâ€¦." He sobbed harder, not even realizing one voice starting to stand out from the others - the voice of his mother, softly calling his name and looking deeply into his eyes. When had she come in?

"Hiccup," Valka said, caressing her boy's cheek. "It's alright. It's me. I'm here." This did not soothe him, however, and Hiccup buried his face into his mother's tunic front and cried. Valka simply held him close, noting the heat radiating off his small body. Toothless poked his head around, nuzzling Hiccup's side with a worried whine. As he cried, Hiccup lapsed into coughing or sneezing fits at different intervals, increasing the level of misery and making him feel even more pathetic. She rubbed his back gently until his sobbing turned to soft sniffles and hiccups. With one hand, she managed to set his pillow up against the headboard so he could lie back on it and still be in an upright position. Slowly, she eased him back against the propped-up pillow and handed him the now cool sheep's milk. He took a sip, his hands shaking so violently that the liquid sloshed about and nearly spilled. She found the rag among his heap of tangled furs and rewet it in the bucket before using it to once more sponge off the boy's glistening face. Her other hand rested over his, supporting it and holding it steady as he sipped again at the milk.

Hiccup felt wretched, and worse, he felt like a helpless, weak child. The pain was almost unbearable, and he knew he was acting ridiculous. He was a grown man now, and the chief of Berk. He should not have been acting this way, should not have been taken down by such an illness. Moreover, he should have been able to take care of himself. He took another few sips, the cool liquid soothing his burning throat and calming his churning stomach despite the initial pain of swallowing. Slowly, his ragged breathing returned to normal.

"Mom," he said, and though he tried for toughness it came out as a whimper. "I'm sorry, I-" But Valka cut him off.

"Hush now, Hiccup. It's alright," she told him softly, setting the glass by the bedside again and easing him down into a comfortable position. But not before another desperate "Hehhâ€¦| rihh \_\_\*\*SSCCTCHH\*\*\_!" escaped him. The sneeze did little to alleviate the tickle in his nose, and a second, third, and fourth followed in rapid succession: "\_Hehhhâ€¦| IHxxTSCH! IhhhxtTSSCH! Hehhhâ€¦| Hehhhrrâ€¦| nnnxxt\_\_\*\*SCHH\*\*\_\_uu!\_" The fit left Hiccup's eyes and nose streaming and drippy. Valka sighed sympathetically and pulled a handkerchief from her pocket, gently dabbing at her son's wet cheeks and glistening nostrils. Whatever of his childhood she had missed she seemed to be making up for bundled all in this one instant â€" wiping every tear, clearing away a snotty nose, comforting and quieting his

crying, soothing a fever. This was motherhood at its finest. After another quick wipe, she held the handkerchief over her son's bulblike nose.

"Blow," she instructed. Hiccup looked up at her, his eyes still wet and now rimmed red from the tears and the sneezing fit. His cheeks flushed slightly pinker in embarrassment.

"Mom, I can-" he started, but Valka looked at him sternly.

"Blow, Hiccup," she said again, more firmly this time. Then, gentler, she added, "You'll feel better for it." Hesitantly, swallowing his already-wounded pride, the Dragon Master, blew softly into the cottony fabric, attempting to clear his sinuses of the pressure and tickle. Liquid rushed into the handkerchief, but Valka did not pull away. Instead, she waited patiently for the warm stream to abate, then pinched gently, stemming the flow of liquid and cleaning his nose again, careful not to further irritate the chapped redness. "There," she said, folding the cloth up and setting it aside in case he needed it later. "Now then. I'll clean this right up. I'm sending Toothless to fetch a healer. They'll know what to do." Hiccup nodded silently, lying back and shutting his eyes again. His body tried to find warmth beneath his blanket furs, but even they weren't warm enough to stop his incessant shuddering. He was cold, too cold. He curled in on himself, but felt too weak to do much else. He settled for just letting his teeth chatter and his body shake, suffering in silence for his mother's sake.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. Valka stood and looked down at her son. "Now who could that be?" She asked, moving down the stairs to investigate. She answered the knock and found Astrid standing there, nervously fiddling with her skirt.

"Astrid?" Valka asked. "Whatever are you doing here so early?"

"Looking for Hiccup, actually," the girl responded. "He didn't come down to the stables this morning, and we were supposed to go work on the map today."

"Oh dear," Valka said. "Come in, Astrid. I'm afraid Hiccup won't be coming with you today. He's taken ill in the night. I was just about to send Toothless to fetch a healer, but if you're here, I'll go myself."

"Wait, Hiccup is sick?" Astrid asked worriedly, accepting the woman's invitation in. "Is he alright? Can I see him? Is it contagious, do you need help? Is he sleeping, should I come back later? Oh, he must feel terrible."

"Slow down, Astrid," Valka said with a small smile. "Yes, you can see him. It may do him some good." The fact that Valka blatantly refused to answer the rest of Astrid's questions did not go unnoticed, but Astrid did not bring it up. The young Viking nodded anxiously and headed upstairs to Hiccup's bed chamber. Seeing her boyfriend lying ill, she rushed to his side, ignoring the puddle Toothless was currently trying (and failing) to clean. She dropped to her knees by his side and gently rested a hand on his shoulder. Slowly, glassy eyes fluttered open. Groaning softly through the pain, Hiccup shifted positions and looked up at Astrid with unfocused, fever-bright

eyes.

"A-Astrid?" He asked, suppressing a cough. "Wha-what are you d-doing here?" Tenderly, Astrid began carding her fingers through Hiccup's sweaty hair, her movements fluid. Valka left them alone and helped Toothless clean up.

"I waited for you at the stables, but you never came, so I got worried and came looking for you," she explained, her tone just barely above a whisper. "Hiccup, why wouldn't you tell me you were feeling ill?"

"To be honest, it didn't set in until last night," he told her, his speech slurred and choppy thanks to the fever and his chattering teeth. Astrid gazed down at him, concern embedded deep in her stare. Hiccup was always doing this, from hiding a Night Fury from the entire village and training it to fly to taking on a murderous madman with an army of dragons. Somehow, he always got into trouble, and ended up hurting himself. She glanced down at where his prosthetic leg would be underneath his covers and sighed.

"Hiccup Haddock, you can be so stubborn," she chastised lovingly. Hiccup managed a weak smile in return.

"Guilty as charged, milady," he quipped.

"How do you manage to do this to yourself?" She asked, her fingers gently tracing his jaw.

"Do wh-what?" Hiccup asked, his breath hitching. He tried to turn his face, but his aching body would not allow for the quick movement before his nose let out another heart-wrenching sneeze. "\_Hihhhhhâ€| IITTSSCHHuuuh!"\_ It was wet, and his hand didn't come up from under the blankets in time. A thin coat of spray glistened on Astrid's arm, which she pulled back in alarm. Hiccup groaned. "Godsâ€| 'm sorry, Astrid, I didn't mean toâ€|."

"Shh," Astrid said gently, wiping her arm on one of Hiccup's furs and returning her hand to his cheek, cupping it in her palm. "It's no big deal, Hiccup. Everyone sneezes." Hiccup looked at her, and though his eyes were bright with fever, they softened with relief at her words. He leaned his face into her palm, like Toothless sometimes did when he was craving attention.

"Hiccup, I'm going to fetch a healer," Valka said, interrupting the moment. "Astrid, you're welcome to stay, if you want to." Astrid started and looked from Valka to Hiccup uncertainly. Hiccup reached out from under the furs with a weak, trembling hand and tugged his girlfriend's sleeve as firmly as he could manage (which was more limply than he had anticipated).

"Please stay," he begged hoarsely. It pulled Astrid's heartstrings to hear him beg her like that, and she nodded almost immediately.

"I will," she promised. "Of course I will. I'm staying, right here, with you." Hiccup relaxed at her words and touch. Valka smiled.

"I'll be back as soon as I can, Hiccup," she said, rising to her feet. "Take care of him, Astrid."

"It would be my pleasure," she agreed with a small smile, running her thumb smoothly across the sick chief's hairline, back and forth, in a constant, sweeping motion. Hiccup shivered and moaned as she stroked his warm face. He leaned in, craving more. Valka slipped silently from the room after one more glance at the two lovers and rushed off to find a healer.

Hiccup kept his eyes closed, his head throbbing miserably to some invisible war drum beat. Astrid's hand served to abate some of the agony, but not enough to erase it entirely. He wanted to cry out in pain, but smothered the urge for fear of embarrassment.

"How do you feel?" Astrid asked once she heard the front door shut. "Honestly, Hiccup, no lies." Hiccup didn't even manage to open his eyes.

"Aw-awful," he admitted. "Like I've been mauled by a Night Fury and poisoned at the same time." Astrid tsked.

"Poor thing," she said sympathetically. "Why don't you get some sleep?"

"I can't," he murmured weakly.

"What do you mean you can't?" Astrid asked with a half-laugh. "Of course you can. I'll be here in case someone needs you."

"No, I mean between nonstop coughing and fever dreams, I can't sleep," he explained. Astrid sighed heavily and nodded, understanding. There was no point arguing with him, he wouldn't listen anyway.

"Well, then rest, at least," she told him. "I'm right here."

"I know," he said. "And I'll be fine, I'm sure it won't last long." But even as he said it, the words sounded hollow and uncertain.

"Your mom went to find a healer," Astrid said. "I'm sure you'll be fine in no time and back to your old stubborn self." She grinned playfully at him, and he returned the smile with one of his own, though it did not reach his eyes. Astrid noticed, of course, as she always noticed small things with Hiccup, but said nothing. Instead, soft hands ruffled his hair, and a comfortable silence settled in between them for what felt like a long stay.

Toothless sat by, watching the two and listening to the exchange. Slowly, he curled up in the corner, resting his head by his wings and continuing to gaze at Astrid and Hiccup with a contented coo. In his mind, it seemed, if Hiccup was with Astrid, then things would be okay. Several more moments of silence passed, and Astrid was almost sure Hiccup had dozed off when the first cough ripped through the boy's chest and reverberated throughout the small room, causing Toothless' ears to perk up anxiously. That cough was followed by another, and another, until Hiccup was consumed by another coughing fit.

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><p><strong>AN: That's all for now! Reviews keep me going. Thank you all, and be back soon!\*\*

\*\*~SS\*\*

### 3. Chapter 3

\*\*A/N: Hi again, everyone. Sorry for the late update... ran into a bad case of writer's block. But, never fear! I have returned with a new chapter. This one I particularly like, I think you'll see why.  
\*\*

\*\*Usual disclaimers apply!\*\*

\*\*Please enjoy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 3<p>

Harsh, barking coughs ripped his lungs, making his chest burn like fire and ache as though he were running a marathon. His throat felt sliced to ribbons, like someone was forcing him to swallow a white hot sword. Ruthless, hacking coughs were forced out of him until he was gasping for breaths and trembling with the exertion. His sore rib seemed to splinter, making him cry out between coughs that pitched him forward and desperate gasps for much-needed oxygen. Her eyes wide with terror, Astrid yanked Hiccup roughly by the shirt, manhandling him into a sitting position and slapping his back more roughly than she had intended in an attempt to stop his choking. His back stung from her forceful swatting, but slowly, he began to regain control. He barely noticed Astrid forcing the glass of sheep's milk back into his hands and up to his mouth, urging him silently with her eyes to drink. He sipped at it through the fit, praying to the gods he didn't start to choke on it, and his paroxysms ebbed considerably.

Toothless perked up immediately at the sound and came over to investigate, barking softly and trying to understand what was happening to his friend. He watched Astrid rub Hiccup's shoulder, and lowered his head into the boy's lap, only to pull back when he realized his rider was far too warm. Toothless growled softly, then gazed with puppy eyes up at Astrid for an explanation. She didn't offer one, too concerned about the shaking boy in her arms.

"Easy," she said softly. "There you go. Breathe, Hiccup. You've got to breathe." Panting, Hiccup nodded. The coughing had knocked loose some of the congestion in his pounding head, and he sniffled to keep from dripping all over himself and Astrid. Toothless rejecting him a second time while in this state hit him hard, and he lowered his head, trying not to show that it had gotten to him.

"I'm alright, bud," Hiccup mumbled, holding his hand out to the dragon, who watched it carefully before reluctantly nuzzling it. "It's just a cough." Toothless cooed persistently, convinced there was something very wrong with his rider. Hiccup's voice was nearly gone, now raspy and guttural. His nose was an angry shade of crimson and was dripping slightly onto his upper lip. He had dark, bruise-like circles around his eyes, and he was visibly shaking. The dragon took

all this in, instinctively coming closer to his rider and attempting to figure out what was wrong.

"Hiccup, you look exhausted," Astrid commented, gently massaging his shoulders. The young chief moaned softly as her fingers worked, abating some of the ache in his muscles. "There's got to be a way to stop your coughing."

"Mom tried tonic and honey," he said, wincing as it hurt his throat. "It didn't help." He sniffled, blushing at the slurping sound it made. Astrid quieted for a moment, deep in thought. When she was younger and had come down with bad coughs, her parents had always given her tea with herbs from Healer Island. Before that, they had used warm yak milk, and before thatâ€¦

"Steam!" Astrid finally exclaimed, scaring both Hiccup and Toothless, who had settled into a comfortable silence. "That's it! When I was little, my parents would set me up with a bowl of hot water and let me breathe in the steam. It worked like a charm!

"Hot water?" Hiccup asked. "You really think this will work?"

"Well, we won't know unless we try!" Astrid said, still excited at her discovery. "Besides, if it lets you get rest before your mom gets back with a healer, then no harm done!" Hiccup winced.

"Okay, Astrid, I'mâ€¦ still right here, no need to yell," he said, holding the side of his head, which was now throbbing harder and making his ears ring.

"Right. Sorry," she said, smiling apologetically and kissing his cheek. "I'll boil some water, see if we can't let you rest a little." Hiccup nodded.

"I'llâ€¦ do whatever it takes," he promised, relishing her gentle kiss. "Thank you."

"Mhmm," Astrid said distractedly, already up and rushing towards the door, calling out a hasty "Make sure he tries to rest," to Toothless. The dragon cocked his head, then turned to his rider and hesitantly rested his head in the Viking's lap. Hiccup idly scratched at Toothless' head scales, resting his uncomfortably warm forehead on the dragon's cool one.

"I justâ€¦ gotta close my eyes for a second," he murmured. Toothless cooed curiously and nuzzled Hiccup, urging him back onto the bed with his head. Hiccup struggled as hard as he could to remain upright, but he was too weak to stop the Night Fury on a regular day, let alone when he was this ill, and so he lost. He leaned back upon his bed, coughing tiredly, and curled in on himself. Everything was aching, the room was now spinning, and he was exhausted past the point of pretense. Toothless took pity on his miserable rider, wrapping him up in his black, warm, protective wings and curling up beside him. Hiccup scrunched his eyes shut, trying to block out the feelings vying for his attention, from the confusing hot-yet-cold sensations to his pounding headache and aching limbs.

He was nearing sleep, he could feel it, surrounding him from all sides and waiting to overtake him, when he heard Astrid return. He opened his eyes reluctantly and sat up, peeking out between

Toothless' wings.

"Hey, budâ€¦ give me a minute, please, okay?" He asked. The dragon more or less rolled his eyes, but complied, leaving Hiccup shivering as he once more tried to sit upright. Astrid chuckled and went over to Hiccup's side, helping him up and covering him as best she could with his blanket furs. She then set a steaming bowl in his lap with a quick, "Be careful, it's hot." Next, she added a sprig of sweet-smelling mint and a small hint of camphor to the bowl before sitting down beside her boyfriend on his bed. She gingerly brushed through his messy fringe with her fingers.

"Alright, just lean forward, babe," she murmured, guiding him with one hand on his back. He bent low over the hot bowl, letting the steam cover his face. It tormented his abused, chapped, cherry-red nose. "That's it," she told him encouragingly, rubbing his back. "Now just breathe in the steam." Hiccup nodded, coughing weakly into his fist and taking a few rattling breaths. The steam tickled his nostrils and sinuses, making his nose twitch and quiver and his breaths hitch desperately. Astrid meanwhile covered his head and the bowl with a blanket to trap the heat and moisture for him to breathe in.

Stifled under the warm blanket with a hot, steaming bowl and a rising fever, Hiccup began to sweat profusely until it soaked through the back of his tunic. His nose began to run like a flowing river. He tried to stem it by pressing the heel of his hand firmly to his septum, but it just covered his hand in the drippy mess and made his eyes water. He tried to sniffle, but it didn't help stop the liquid from slipping right out of his nose. His nostrils flared, tiny droplets of congestion beginning to drip from the end of his nose into the bowl. Suddenly, his eyes rolled back, lashes fluttering, and his breath hitched mightily. He realized he was no longer in control of his abused nose just seconds before the fit began.

"\_Hehhhâ€¦ehhhâ€¦\_\_ hehhhS\_\_\*\*SCH\*\*\_Huu!\_ \_Hehhhâ€¦ rihh \_\_\*\*SSCCTCHH\*\*\_! \_Ehhhttsch'uu! Ihh\_\_\*\*SSCHOO!\*\*\_" The steam did nothing to help, and his entire upper lip glistened. His eyes were leaking as though he was crying, his nose was running copiously, and he was sweating profusely now. He felt completely powerless, completely miserable. Toothless looked on, pacing back and forth and flapping his wings in confusion.

Astrid hurriedly removed the blankets and thrust her handkerchief at him, eyes wide. "Hey, hey, calm down," she tried to soothe him, patting his back. Hiccup snuffled into the cloth fabric, letting out a few more wrenching sneezes and coughs intermittently. "\_Hehhhrrâ€¦ nnnxxtSCHHuu! Nnnhihhhâ€¦nnxxxttschh! Ihhhsschh! \_\_\*\*SHH\*\*\_xxx'tt!" Terrified he may burn himself in the confusion, Astrid quickly grabbed the bowl of water from his lap and set it aside, out of the way of the desperately pitching and spasming Viking chief.

Finally, after a few more gut-wrenching fits, Hiccup calmed down and took a deep breath, his nose clear but the handkerchief dripping wet.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry!" Astrid said, her eyes wide and her stance rigid, her voice bordering on hysteria. "I thought it would help, Hiccup, I didn't mean for you to have an attack like that." Hiccup

waved his hand dismissively.

"Hey, don't worry about it," he croaked, his throat stinging from the exertion as he spoke. "Actuallyâ€¦ I think it did help." He sniffed experimentally through clear sinuses. He breathed deeply, his sinuses unblocked. "It worked, Astrid!" He said excitedly, too tired to muster up more than a small grin resembling a grimace.

"It did?" Astrid asked, her face brightening. "It did! Good! How do you feel?"

"Lessâ€¦ less drippy," he said, trying to put it into words. "And less like I'm going to cough up a lung." He still had a headache, worse now from the steam and the sneezing, but he didn't tell her that, wanting her to feel good about how much she had in fact helped him. "This is amazing, the cough is justâ€¦ gone. Why didn't we think of this sooner?" Astrid smiled shyly.

"My parents used to do this all the time, and it was always helpful," she said. "The camphor should keep you from coughing for several hours, just enough for you to get some rest." Hiccup nodded and stifled a yawn, as though illustrating her point. "I know you're tired. Why don't you sleep? You can now. We'll wake you up when your mom gets back with the healer, won't we, Toothless?" The dragon peered out from behind his wing and nodded with a coo. Hiccup smiled again and slumped back down onto his pillow. Astrid very gently and deliberately covered him, though she was aware of his sweating now. Once he was tucked in, she retrieved the rag and soaked it again, sitting down on the edge of his bed and using it to carefully sponge off his brow. Hiccup sighed in relief and closed his eyes, curling up close to her leg. He had barely enough time to murmur a soft, "Thanks, Astrid," before sleep wrapped its soothing tendrils around him and pulled him down into a more peaceful rest.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: So that's it for now. The healer will be arriving in the next chapter, which will go up in about a week! Thank you all for reviewing, and if you feel inspired, please continue to do so, as I love to know how I'm doing, and reviews keep me going.\*\*

\*\*Bye for now!\*\*

\*\*~SS\*\*

End  
file.